An analysis of the efficiency of solutions to urban homelessness in South Africa.

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Contents:

Abstract

Although difficult to measure, anecdotal evidence and limited data suggest the prevalence of homelessness in South Africa is large. Moreover, it poses sizable costs to society, predominantly through crime (Hopkins, Reaper and Vos, 2020). Solutions for homelessness vary across countries, depending on ideology and resource constraints (Roche, 2004). While some countries, such as the United States of America, place more onus on the individual to overcome homelessness; others, like England, place greater responsibility on government (Cross, Seager, Erasmus, Ward and O'Donovan, 2010). In South Africa, housing provision and legislation which criminalises homelessness is emphasised (Naidoo, 2010; Killander, 2019). This paper analyses the causes of homelessness to find that the issue is circumstance-based. Following this, solutions to homelessness are interrogated to assess the current South African approach to homelessness. Ultimately, it is suggested that measures which address core contributors to homelessness are needed, more than the provision of a physical house.

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Introduction

The lack of adequate housing is one of the greatest challenges South Africa faces post-1994 1994 (Goodlad, 1996). Additionally, but not independently, urban homelessness exists. While the homeless population is difficult to estimate due to constancy of movement and lack of complete records (Peressini, McDonald, and Hulchanski, 1996); the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) approximated a national homeless population between 100 000 to 200 000 individuals in 2008. These estimates show that more than 3 000 of those living on the streets are children (Cross et al., 2010; Desmond, Timol, Groenewald and Sausi, 2017).

Across literature, the term 'homeless' is used broadly to encapsulate different groups. Therefore, setting a definition for this term is necessary as it will warrant different remedies. The most basic definition of homelessness is 'primary homelessness' and classifies an individual as homeless if they physically live on the street (Rule-Groenewald, Timol, Khalema, and Desmond, 2015). These individuals are more recently referred to as 'street people' (City of Cape Town, 2013). Alternate definitions of homelessness consider a home to be private place which inhabitants may exercise full control over (Olufemi, 2002). Under this definition, those who live in inadequate housing may be categorised as homeless (Rule-Groenewald et al., 2015). While individuals in inadequate housing are faced with challenges in their own right, it is argued that the broader definition detracts from the plight of street people who suffer the most severe consequences of not having shelter (Cross et al., 2010). Therefore, this paper utilizes primary homelessness, as defined by the the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR) (2008): "Primary homelessness… includes persons living in the streets or without a shelter." Furthermore, the terms 'street people' and 'homeless individuals' are used interchangeably.

Compared to the humanitarian and constitutional connotations of homelessness, the economic arguments are relatively understated. It is the economic perspective that will form the predominant part of this discussion. In this regard, there is a dual-causality at play: the number of street people tends to increase under poor economic conditions (Sard, 2009); while, simultaneously, the existence of homelessness tends to negatively impact the economy due to increased costs (Cross et al., 2010). These include the increased cost of crime as an individual's likelihood of being involved in crime increases when they are homeless (Daya and Wilkins, 2012; Roebuck, 2008), and the increased costs of healthcare due to higher prevalence of illness amongst street people (Larimer et al., 2009). Increased healthcare costs are, however, not as significant crime (Hopkins et al., 2020). Involvement in crime and poor health outcomes are exacerbated by substance abuse (Flanagan and Briggs, 2016).

More broadly, greater visibility of homelessness is associated with a negative impact on investment (Cross et al., 2010). However, this could be explained by the fact that lower-income countries tend to have higher levels of homelessness (Speak, 2019), thus inherently attracting less investment (Marr, 1997). However, according to the OHCHR (2008) and Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESR) the presence of homeless may indicate the inability of government to provide adequate housing and access to basic needs. The number of the homeless persons per 100 000 persons of the population is considered a good economic indicator of the government's ability to meet these goals (OHCHR, 2008). Despite some existing literature on this topic (Cross et al., 2010; Desmond et al., 2017; Rule-Groenewald et al., 2015), homelessness is still under-researched, both globally and in South Africa. Underpinning the resolution of this issue is the establishment of whether the driving cause of homelessness is a lack of housing, or other issues, such as poverty,

personal circumstances, the placement of subsidised housing, social isolation and unemployment (Daya and Wilkins, 2012).

This paper is a discursive utilisation of secondary research and sets out the context for homelessness in South Africa. First, the theoretical costs of homelessness are discussed to reiterate the economic burden of the issue impose. Next, the causes of homelessness are discussed, to establish that this issue is not one of housing alone. It is then possible to critically assess the efficiency of solutions, through the use of available literature.

The theoretical economic costs of homelessness

Studies which estimate the costs of homelessness do exist, however the first South African study of this kind (Hopkins et al., 2020) was completed as recently as March 2020 in Cape Town. Because this research is uniquely applicable to the South African context, this section will predominantly draw on evidence from this study. However, where there is missing information or further theoretical considerations to be discussed, international and older literature will be referenced.

In the study conducted by the Coalition to End Homelessness ("CEH") and summarised by Hopkins et al. (2020), census data, published records and a representative survey of 350 street people in the Cape Metro were used to estimate the number street people in Cape Town to be 14 357 individuals. Furthermore, the total cost of homelessness is approximated at R774 million per annum, or an average of R51 811 per person, per annum (CEH, 2020). These costs come from different areas of expenditure. Previous literature outlines three areas in which homelessness presents costs: government costs (such as funding the criminal justice, healthcare and grants systems), costs to the economy (such as loss of tax revenue) and costs to the homeless individual (which manifests in terms of welfare and quality of life) (Crisis, 2016). Differing slightly, CEH study (2020) breaks these costs into developmental costs, reactive/punitive costs and humanitarian costs. Developmental costs refer to costs associated with providing supportive services to street people including food, shelter and social support. Reactive costs are those required to address the consequences of homelessness, such as cleaning up urban areas and most pertinently, financing the criminal justice system (Hopkins et al., 2020). Lastly, humanitarian costs encapsulate donations made to street people by other city residents.

The CEH's study (2020) found that the largest cost of homelessness in Cape Town is reactive/punitive measures, predominantly related to crime. These costs comprise almost half (45%) of the total costs associated with homelessness (Hopkins et al., 2020). This finding aligns with previous literature (Barak and Bohm, 1989; McCarthy and Hagan, 1991; Berk and MacDonald, 2010) which finds a positive correlation between homelessness and the prevalence of crime. Additionally, street people are more likely to be victims of crime, due to their increased vulnerability (Mathebula and Ross, 2013). There are explicit and implicit costs associated with crime. Models which attempt to these costs vary in stance of what to include. For example, some models (Brand and Price, 2000; McCollister, French and Fang, 2010) account for economic losses experienced by victims in addition to government spending on the criminal justice system. Government spending includes "police protection, judicial and legal activities, and corrections", where substance abuse rehabilitation is sometimes included under "corrections" (McCollister, French and Fang, 2010:98). However, in South Africa, it appears that the cost of crime

is primarily calculated using only the costs to government through urban management and management of the criminal justice system. Rehabilitation costs are excluded (Hopkins et al., 2020).

Another component of increased spending due to homelessness is healthcare. Street people are more likely to experience multiple illnesses simultaneously (Read, 2008). The extent to which they suffer from disease is often more intense due to prolonged periods with poor or no treatment (Griffiths, 2002; Read, 2008; Daya and Wilkins, 2012;). Healthcare is often inaccessible to street people due to high costs or overburdened hospitals (Read, 2008). Read (2008) further poses that a lack of ongoing care results in the overuse of emergency services which are more costly. Makiwane et al. (2010:44) argue that "the health hazards of [a homeless] lifestyle can lead to gradual deterioration of overall quality of life and minimise [one's] chances of ever transcending their homelessness." Furthermore, those without houses are more likely to be admitted to hospital at younger ages (Hwang, Weaver, Aubry and Hoch, 2011); and mortality rates are three times higher amongst homeless individuals compared to the housed population (Larimer et al. 2009). However, the mortality rate of street people may be disproportionately high for a variety of reasons, other than health issues alone.

Cost-estimations comparing the healthcare of the housed to homeless populations do not appear to exist in South Africa. The CEH study (2020) excludes these costs as they are difficult to accurately determine. This type of research does, however, exist in other countries such as the work of Hwang et al. (2011) in Canada. This study of 3081 homeless participants controlled for age, gender and a weighting for the intensity of medical resources used. On average, the hospital admission cost for the homeless group was $2559 higher than the housed control group (Hwang et al., 2011). While these findings align with the hypothesis that homelessness increases national healthcare costs, it is insubstantially justified to assume that the same results would apply in South Africa, particularly when there is a risk that the street population may resort to not seeking healthcare, thereby not posing as large of a cost. Thus, at this point, it is not possible to accurately assume that the healthcare cost differential between the housed and homeless populations, or the quantity of healthcare services used by street people is large enough to warrant concern, based on limited data.

Nevertheless, the healthcare and crime arguments are made in conjunction with substance abuse arguments. Approximately 64% of street people in Cape Town have an existing addiction to substances (Hopkins et al., 2020). A similar relationship was observed by Johnson and Chamberlain (2008) in Australia, however, to a lesser extent (43%). It is estimated that anywhere from thirty to seventy percent of deaths of homeless individuals is due to abuse of substances (Larimer et al., 2009). One hypothesis for the high prevalence of substance abuse amongst the homeless population is that substances are often used as a coping mechanism for the hardships experienced with homelessness (Daya and Wilkins, 2012).

Substance abuse may also be exacerbated by mental illness (Johnson and Chamberlain, 2008; Larimer et al., 2009). Once again, a costing of mental illness suffered by the homeless is not available in South Africa. However, despite not being entirely comparable to South Africa, Hwang et al.'s (2011) Canadian study can once again be referred to as a theoretical effect that may be applicable in South Africa. In this study, psychiatric medical services were $1058 higher for the homeless group relative to their housed counterparts (Hwang et al., 2011). This suggests

a positive relationship between homelessness and the likelihood of suffering from mental illness. Pertinently, substance abuse and mental illness thereby indirectly exacerbate the costs of homelessness by worsening the costs of crime and healthcare; and resulting in a longer time spent on the streets (Daya and Wilkins, 2012). The longer one is homeless for, the more costly it becomes to assist this individual, due to increased complexity of the issues they suffer and a gradually more deteriorated mental and physical health (Hopkins et al., 2020). A longer period on the streets also indicates a greater quantity of costs, as the same costs which are usually associated with homelessness persist over longer periods. The effect of substance abuse as a cause to homelessness will be discussed in greater depth in the next section.

This section spoke mostly to the reactive costs associated with homelessness as these are the greatest in South Africa (Hopkins et al., 2020). However, despite the developmental and humanitarian costs being lesser, they remain present and sizeable. In Cape Town, humanitarian costs such as donations and public support amount to an average of R286.6 million per annum, while developmental costs like the provision of shelters amount to R121.9 million per annum (Hopkins et al., 2020). It is thus evident then that the developmental costs that are the cheapest cost associated with homelessness.

Causes of Homelessness in South Africa

Based on the above, it appears that homelessness presents costs to society through a variety of channels. Central to abating these costs is the establishment of the underlying cause thereof. One of the most common debates across literature is whether homelessness is caused by inadequate levels of affordable housing or other, intrinsic issues such as high levels of poverty and unemployment (Cross et al., 2010; du Toit, 2010). This debate is especially relevant in South Africa where housing is one of the most contentious issues the post-apartheid government bears (Goodlad, 1996). If the issue is, indeed, one of inadequate housing; the best solution may be for government to provide houses or shelter for the homeless. If not, it may be more effective for government to rather focus on policy which addresses the other, root causes of homelessness.

The success of housing in addressing homelessness will be discussed more in the next section. However, it should first be noted that if homelessness were a result of lack of housing alone, it is probable that informal, self-built housing (such as shacks) would be erected, even if this solution is temporary in nature (Cross et al., 2010). Despite the poor living conditions within some informal housing units (Simiyu, Cairncross and Swilling, 2019), which may classify such as inadequate; this still constitutes a shelter and the habitation thereof causes an individual to cease being classified as homeless as defined. Yet, this is often not the case. There remains a large cohort of individuals who live on the streets rather than informal housing, despite the relative ease and affordability of erection compared to obtaining subsidised or formal housing (Cross et al., 2010). This suggests that there are other factors rendering one homeless, besides the lack of physical shelter.

To elaborate on this point, it is pertinent to first discuss the practical reasons why individuals might not choose to erect informal housing. First, land upon which informal settlements are built is usually placed far from economic opportunity (National Treasury, 2013). This means that the inhabitants thereof must spend large portions of their wages on transport costs (National Treasury, 2013). A large portion (40%) of individuals who live in informal

settlements are employed, and/or receive social grants (Cross et al., 2010). These streams of income can go towards paying for transport into city centres. Contrast to this, Cross et al. (2010) argue that many street people are unemployed and do not receive social support grants. To these individuals, high transport costs are unaffordable, thus there is an incentive to move closer to areas with employment opportunities, even if it means risking not having a house (Smith and Hall, 2018). Additionally, the presence of networks and communities within informal settlements allows for better pooling of resources and funds to meet costs, such as the high transport cost (Cross et al., 2010).

Second, individuals who live in informal settlements are also distinguishable from street people in terms of household dynamics. The differences in familial structure and strength of familial relationships have shown to play an important role in whether one becomes homeless or not (Daya and Wilkins, 2012). While those living in informal settlements typically live in communities or with families, the homeless population is largely comprised of single individuals (majority of whom are men) who have lost contact with their families and live alone (Cross et al., 2010). Makiwane et al. (2010) and Herman et al. (1997) identify that there is an increased likelihood of being homeless if one has experienced an "underprivileged or troubled youth." This terminology is used to describe a variety of difficult childhood experiences such as experiencing abuse, moving continuously between foster homes, being raised by a single parent, growing up in poverty or running away from home (Makiwane et al., 2010:42).

Although the majority of the homeless population in South Africa are single men (Cross et al., 2010), homeless women homeless may experience additional factors which contribute to them becoming homeless: the dependency on their husbands and subsequent passing of their husband, domestic confrontations or pregnancies at a young age which result in a rejection from their families (Makiwane et al., 2010). These elements are not unique to the South African context. Finally, in more extreme cases of poor household relations, individuals are born into street-life. This is evidenced largely by the estimated three-thousand children who live on the streets (Desmond et al., 2017). Therefore, more than just the provision of a physical house, what should be considered is the impact the relationships and social dynamics within one's household (or lack thereof) in reducing (intensifying) their likelihood of becoming homeless. Moreover, networks and relationships are vital in building social skills (Cross et al., 2010), which later aid an individual in obtaining employment (Poremski et al., 2016).

Daya and Wilkins (2012) argue that the "home" (familial or household space), whether carrying positive or negative connotations for the individual, is an important space for the creation of self-identity, especially in a society that places such a great emphasis on the home. In a more practical way, lack of self-identity is manifested in lack of identification documents (Wiltz, 2017). However, lack of self-identity also negatively influences one's perception of their place in society or their ability to control their own circumstances (Snow and Anderson, 1987). These feelings may make it more difficult for an individual to escape homelessness, especially if they trigger underlying mental health issues an individual may have (Daya and Wilkins, 2012; Larimer et al., 2009). Mental illness is therefore also an aggravator and consequence of homelessness. Hopkins et al. (2020) discuss mental illness in depth, along with substance abuse, because of the role it plays in chronic homelessness. Chronic homelessness is defined as "people who have experienced homelessness consistently for at least a year — or repeatedly over several years — while struggling with a disabling condition such as a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability" (Hopkins et al., 2020:6). The concept of chronic homelessness is

important for discussion as it entails the perpetuation of the homeless state which, results in increased costs. While the initial cause of homelessness is important, it is equally poignant to consider the factors which inhibit an individual from escaping this state.

The CEH study (2020) found that 65% of the homeless population in Cape Town suffer from mental illness (Hopkins et al., 2020). Hwang et al. (2011) also concluded that being homeless increases the chances of being admitted for psychiatric illness. Larimer et al. (2009) present that the trauma one experiences from living on the streets may trigger underlying mental illness conditions. Furthermore, mental health conditions such as depression can often further exacerbate the desire to abuse substances (Flanagan and Briggs, 2016). Those with mental and physical disabilities are also commonly neglected by their families and in this way, fall into homelessness (Makiwane et al. 2010). Additionally, being on the streets exposes this group to conditions and risks which may worsen their initial conditions (Makiwane et al. 2010). Gaetz (2012) also suggests that the longer one lives on the streets, the greater the deterioration on one's wellbeing. Thus, overall, the longer an individual lives on the streets, the more difficult it becomes for them to escape homelessness (Hopkins et al., 2020).

If housing or the above factors are not the cause of homelessness, the next argument to be addressed is that individuals choose homelessness. In addressing the idea that homelessness is a choice, some perceive homelessness as the side-effect of deliberate, non-participatory behaviour from individuals (North, Smith and Spitznagel, 1993). Individuals are classified as adopting this type of behaviour if they consciously refrain from participating in or do not wish to make a contribution to society (Cross et al., 2010). The choice to adopt reclusive behaviour may be linked to the reasons outlined above such as psychological trauma from abuse (Harding and Irving, 2014). In some instances, this attitude may manifest in an individual refusing to accept help offered, such as shelters (Cross et al., 2010). The decision to enter into crime is sometimes also classified as antisocial or reclusive behaviour (Harding and Irving, 2014). Under this school of thought, the response to homelessness often bears pejorative overtones, as the attitude is that homeless individuals are 'vagrants' who intentionally refuse to contribute to society and, in cases of criminal behaviour, may also be part of the deterioration of society and are thus thought of as social enemies (Cross et al., 2010).

However, conscious non-participatory behaviour as a cause of homelessness seems largely hypothetical and more than an initial cause of homelessness, it is more likely that this type of behaviour is a perpetuator, rather than an initial cause, of homelessness (Northumbria University, 2014). That is, street people may engage in non-participatory behaviour in response to the social exclusion they experience by being homeless, rather than choosing to self-exclude themselves from society to the point that they become homeless. The measures implemented to manage homelessness and the treatment of street people are often harsh or punitive, which may lead to the rejection of assistance as well as the lack of desire to make a contribution to the society in which they have been maltreated (Killander, 2019). These measures will be discussed in greater depth in the next section. If antisocial behaviour were the driving cause of homelessness, there is the logic that one could potentially justify leaving those who are homeless without aid with the reasoning of the homeless bearing responsibility for their state (North et al., 1993). However, from an economic perspective, the presence of homelessness still presents challenges and costs which are necessary to address.

Ultimately, the drivers are homelessness are not easily understood or explained. Desmond et al. (2017:1) state that there is "no single pathway to homelessness." Rather, homelessness may arise from a variety of circumstances; or importantly, a combination of these forces working together. The argument that an individual chooses to be homeless appears unlikely. Thus, the incentive to move to urban centres despite not having a house or employment, against the backdrop of poverty, difficult personal circumstances and the lack of networks and meaningful social interaction may work together to cause homelessness. Substance abuse, involvement in crime and illness further perpetuates this state.

Solutions

In dealing with homelessness, there are a number of approaches that may be taken. The work of Johnsen, Fitzpatrick & Watts (2018) categorises the five types of approaches that might be taken. These are force, coercion, bargaining, influence and tolerance. These approaches vary in harshness, with force being the most severe, to tolerance being the most relaxed approach (Johnsen et al., 2018). Force and coercion overlap to some extent: while force relates to the complete removal of an individual's choice between compliance and non-compliance; coercion utilizes the threat of withdrawal of some benefit (Johnsen et al., 2018). Contrastingly, bargaining seeks to alter behaviour with the promise of some gain; and influence involves method of persuasion to change beliefs and though-processes of those who are homeless. Tolerance is considered the least severe type of social control. It is used to describe the provision of aid such as shelter or food, without the expectation or conditions of any response or behavioural change from the homeless individual (Johnsen et al., 2018).

A common global approach to dealing with homelessness is to select force and treat the homeless as a nuisance to society. In these instances, the state ultimately seems to place the need of economic investment in areas above the needs of the homeless (Killander, 2019). To increase the investment potential of areas, the visibility of the homeless must be decreased (Cross et al., 2010). This is often executed via attempts to keep individuals from using public resources for non-designated purposes through infrastructure design. This is known as hostile, defensive or excluding architecture (De Fine Licht, 2017). De Fine Licht (2017) gives examples of this type of architecture which includes benches which are angled, built with slacks placed far apart from each other or with armrests placed in their centre, preventing one from lying down or sleeping on it. 'Anti-homeless spikes' are also sometimes placed on walls, window ledges or the ground to prevent homeless people from lying down on these surfaces. These practices are particularly prominent in the United States of America and Central America (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2011). Hostile architecture could be considered a forceful or coercive approach, depending on whether the availability to lie down somewhere is completely removed (forceful), or made more difficult (coercive), such as anti-homeless spikes (Johnsen et al., 2018). In certain areas, vegetation is also removed or burned down to make areas less inhabitable for the homeless and make it easier for police forces to detect the presence of the homeless in public spaces (du Toit, 2010).

There are several critiques of these tactics. Firstly, allegedly disincentivising the presence of homelessness does not necessarily eliminate the existence thereof, rather it will most likely displace homeless individuals into different areas and behaviours (Petty, 2016). Second, this approach seems to tend little to the needs of the

homeless. This is arguably problematic from an ethical perspective, but more objectively, does little to address the poor healthcare, employment or general vulnerability of street people which perpetuates homelessness and therefore does not shorten the period of time one is on the street for. A counterargument to this, which advocates for these 'traditional mechanisms' for solving homelessness is that because of their severe, or forceful nature, they are successful in abating homelessness by giving the homeless no alternative but to find solutions out of necessity (Killander, 2019). However, Killander's (2019) argument is flawed in that necessity and desperation may simply result in street people resorting to crime as a solution.

Therefore, solutions which address the root causes of homelessness may be required. Arguably, a large responsibility falls upon government to implement these measures. Historically, homelessness and actions associated therewith, such as begging, have been considered an offence against society and anti-vagrancy legislation was introduced in South Africa as early as the 19th century (Vagrancy Act 23 of 1879). However, more recently, Cross et al (2010:6) describes homelessness as a "gap in policy" due to the fact that there has been a relative stagnation of policy which directly aims to help the homeless population. One reason for a stagnation of policy may be due to the lack of reliable and up-to-date data on the homeless population (Cross et al., 2010) Nevertheless, some policy pertaining to homelessness does exist (Naidoo, 2010). The most notable piece of legislation which indirectly relates to homelessness is the Constitution, section 26 which states that "'Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing" (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1994). This statute applies to both the primary and secondary definitions of homelessness.

However, Killander (2019) outlines that the management of homelessness falls into municipal jurisdiction. This ultimately means that provincial governments may implement different policies to address the presence of homelessness within their own provinces. The varying of legislation from province to province and differential impact thereof is by no means the focal point of this discussion. Nevertheless one can look at relatively recently enforced legislation, which forcefully criminalised acts of homelessness. For example, the Johannesburg Public Open Spaces, introduced in 2004, prohibits 'camping/residing in a public open space' (Public Open Spaces By-laws for the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality of 2004). Contravening a by-law generally results in the imposition of a fine (ranging from R500 to R1500) or six months imprisonment (Schindlers, 2019). In cases of recurring offences, a further fine of up to R50 will be imposed (Public Open Spaces By-laws for the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality of 2004, section 27).

Similar by-laws exist in the Tshwane, Cape Town and eThekwini municipalities. The city of Tshwane is one of the few municipalities which make their fine schedule available (Killander, 2019). In this fine schedule, an example of a fine someone homeless might be faced with is one of R1500 for erecting a shelter, shack, house or structure in a public place with the intention to live in (Tshwane fine schedule by-law policing, 2006). The by-laws of eThekwini section 21(2)(i) legally prohibit lying down on a bench or seating place (eThekwini municipality: Municipal parks and recreational by-law, 2005) Another, more direct form of application of force is the physical removal of the homeless from public spaces, which happens in extreme cases. This is evident in Cape Town, where there is a Displaced Peoples Unit (DPU) of metro police to respond to complaints regarding the homeless and in the Tshwane area where there have been reports entailing harassment, displacement and

stealing from the homeless (du Toit, 2010). Mathebula and Ross' work (2013) finds that there is a great sense of fear and of the police amongst the homeless population.

Although these laws do not specifically discriminate against street people in the same way colonial and apartheid legislation did, the substantive impact of modern legislation is disproportionately heavy on those who do not have homes (du Toit, 2010). While it seems unlikely that someone with a home would actively choose to sleep in a public space for a prolonged period, those without homes often have no alternative (Killander, 2019). The homeless, therefore, are actively confronted with these laws. Much of the literature which critiques the criminalisation of homelessness (Bohm and Barak, 1989; Misetics, 2013; Killander, 2019) does so based on constitutional, ethical or social justice grounds that this treatment is unfair to the homeless.

However, in terms of efficiency and economic considerations, this type of legislation is also ineffective. First and foremost, if one of the driving forces behind homeless is poverty, it is unlikely that the homeless population can afford to pay fines, especially for recurring offenses such as residing in a public space (Maeseele, Roose and De Bie, 2010). Additionally, as previously outlined, using the Cape Town case study, the greatest portion of costs associated with homelessness are those which come from administering the criminal justice services associated with homelessness (Hopkins et al., 2020). The large administrative costs involved with fining and imprisonment, coupled with the continued presence of homeless, insinuate that there may be more cost-effective mechanisms of addressing the issue. Administrative costs prove to be larger still based on the length of time it often takes to process cases against street people, often owing to their lack of documentation (Wiltz, 2017). This causes lengthier periods of detainment, with the average street person in Cape Town being in prison for 37 days a year (CEH, 2020). While a portion of these individuals are arrested for serious crimes, there are also those individuals arrested for petty ones. In essence, the punitive treatment of homelessness is attempting to deal with a symptom of homeless rather than sustainably solving the issue. These arguments render the criminalisation of homeless acts relatively futile in the long-run.

For instance, the penalisation of erecting a shelter in a public space does not address the underlying fact that the individual erecting a shack may do so due to a lack of formal housing. It has already been highlighted that the provision of houses alone may not be sufficient to end the existence of homelessness. However, it is still relevant to assess the extent to which housing has been provided as this is one of the government's responses to homelessness (Naidoo, 2010). In this regard, Cross et al. (2010) describe South Africa as believing in the "capacity of society to perfect itself." This terminology is used to describe the technique whereby policy addresses poverty through the provision of free housing and infrastructure as an asset base through which the poor may build-up their own wealth in future. In this regard, the 1994 White Paper on a New Housing and Policy Strategy for South Africa was introduced to redress the fragmented housing context left by apartheid (Naidoo, 2010). This legislation informed the implementation of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which specifically aimed to provide more houses to secure the right to adequate housing (Olufemi, 2001). This housing programme is aimed at low-income individuals, with incomes between R1500 to R3500 a month (Olufemi, 2001).

In principle, the provision of houses may be an important function for the state. However, the efficiency of the RDP programme leaves much to be desired. These failings are possibly the reason that some may argue the homelessness issue would be reduced with better housing policy. Nonetheless, the point of the Cross et al. (2010)

should be reiterated that the provision of housing may prevent one from becoming homeless, but it does little to assist those who already are homeless in escaping homelessness. The authors elaborate that there is no evidence which suggests that the provision of free housing has resulted in a reduction in the numbers of homeless people who already live on the streets (Cross et al., 2010). Moreover, as the discussion on the causes of homelessness concluded, while housing is important, it is not the only contributor to homelessness. Simply providing a shelter for street people may not be effective in truly ending the chronic homelessness which exists, because it does not address the underlying issues which resulted in the individual becoming homeless, such as substance abuse and unemployment.

While the 1994 White Paper predominantly focuses on the provision of houses and substantively addresses those with inadequate housing, there are some provisions of this document that aim to address those who are entirely without homes, referred to as "special needs housing" (Department of Housing, 1994). These efforts are ultimately manifest in the construction of transitional shelters – that is the provision of "temporary accommodation for persons wanting to make the transition from homelessness to more permanent accommodation" (Naidoo, 2010:134). This type of programme is particularly noticeable in Johannesburg by the presence of the Better Building Programme which does this (du Toit, 2010).

Some of these shelters take a stance of conditional support. This is a coercive measure of addressing homelessness in that it aims to change behaviour through the threat of the alternative being the removal of a particular benefit (Johnsen et al., 2018). Conditional support means that there are support structures in place to assist the homeless, but recipients are only eligible for help if they meet certain criteria, such as attending treatment for addiction or proving that they have sought work (Johnsen et al., 2018). Certain shelters within inner Johannesburg assign positions in the shelters on the condition that their inhabitants obtain employment and move out within six to eighteen months (Olufemi, 2001). Alternatively, the tolerant behavioural approach to homelessness can be taken which is, in effect, an unconditional provision of services and resources to the homeless. In such cases, there are no steps taken on the behalf of the shelter to try to adapt the behaviour of the homeless (Johnsen et al., 2018). Many of these shelters rationalise this because of the goal of creating a safe space for the shelter for the homeless, rather than trying to pressure them into working or changing (Johnson et al., 2018)

Despite this intention, the authors (Johnson et al., 2018) highlight that shelters are often an "ambiguous" place for the homeless, the beneficiaries thereof may not feel a sense of belonging here. The ambiguity of shelters comes from the temporary nature of them. Having temporary shelter does not necessarily compensate for the personal trauma and lack of self-identity one experiences. Thus, despite efforts to make a shelter feel homely, many individuals who frequent shelters explained that because they do not feel this sense of belonging, they were more uneasy about accepting help from such a shelter (Makiwane et al., 2010).

Furthermore, Naidoo (2010) finds that although the intention of shelters is to only be temporary accommodation and assist the move into a permanent home; in many transitional homes, inhabitants fail to find homes after residing in the transitional shelter. Poulsen's study (2000) which researched shelters in Johannesburg reiterated this stance and found that government shelters, although providing the homeless with an overnight home, did little to alleviate their plight because they do not create stable economic conditions for the homeless. Some inhabitants were still trying to meet other financial commitments with only semi-permanent employment, therefore even when

given shelter, these individuals battle to ever move to more permanent housing without a stable income (Poulsen, 2010). A similar study was conducted in Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal, finding that when upliftment policies only allowed for short-term accommodation without the flexibility for the homeless to stay for longer periods of time; and with no sort of 'empowerment training,' those who did briefly live in shelters would struggle to find permanent homes after leaving the shelters (Lund, Ramogayane, Poulsen, and Brand, 2004). Although perhaps a cheaper alternative to funding the criminalisation of the homelessness, the continued necessity for and dependency on shelters without a substantive end to the issue is inefficient. Additionally, because it is difficult to estimate the number of homeless people in a country, it is equally challenging to conclude on whether the current number of shelters in place are sufficient to meet the need for them (du Toit, 2010).

It stands to reason then that whichever solution applied to homelessness should be one with lasting results, rather than short-term policy if the problem is to truly be resolved. In du Toit's study (2010), the metropolitan municipalities of Cape Town, eThekwini, Johannesburg and Tshwane were investigated through interviews and focus groups as well as news reports, municipal websites and documents like policies, programmes and research reports. The author found that three of these municipalities viewed the issue as a social dependency issue. This language is used to describe the state wherein street people rely so heavily on the aid they receive that they are never able to leave shelters or transcend their homeless (du Toit, 2010). If the aim is to create a system whereby street people no longer live on the streets or rely on social services, the solution necessitates that they be reintegrated into society (Cross et al., 2010). To achieve this, a potential approach is one which addresses the underlying issues that increase one's likelihood of becoming homeless. This approach is generally called a 'holistic' one (Hayes, 0' Neill & Weier, 2003). Under this approach, strategies that aim to assist the homeless seek more to provide street people with both a sense of identity as well as employment skills and/or opportunities. In some cases, counselling and the services of social workers is offered to assist in dealing with previous abuse or trauma experienced (Kashner, et al., 2002). In addition to this, certain programmes also adopt strategies to assist in gaining the correct identification documentation for their beneficiaries. This is an administrative step towards street people obtaining employment at a later stage, and according to Makiwane et al. (2010) also reemphasises the individual's sense of self-identity.

Projects like this are supported by Nkomo and Olufemi (2001) who put forward the theory that homelessness is complex issue which necessitates an equally complex and holistic solution. Furthermore, du Toit's study (2010), when interviewing homeless individuals in Johannesburg and Tshwane, found that the support that was valued the most by 53.7 percent of homeless interviewees was when the government provided employment, whereas only 34 percent placed housing as their most valued form of support. 7.3 percent of those interviewed valued social support services most and the remaining 5 percent listed a general 'Other' category as the most valued form of aid. Using the same survey groups, it could also be observed that most street people (62.8 percent) would rather receive aid in obtaining their own house than be offered aid from a shelter (du Toit, 2010). However, Shier, Jones and Graham (2010) found that the perspective of formerly homeless individuals in a shelter differed significantly, depending on how long the individual had been in a shelter. Those who had been in a shelter for an extended period of time or were classified as elderly tended to think the solution to homelessness was access to state grants, whereas those who were new to shelters were more hopeful for reintegration back into society and gaining

employment. This is perhaps indicative that the longer one is in a shelter, the less likely one is to overcome homelessness. This concurs with the findings of Hopkins et al. (2020).

Projects of this nature do not appear to be very prevalent in the South African context. Those which do exist are largely privately organised and funded, rather than by the government. Additionally, costs of these programmes, per beneficiary are not easily accessible. However, a South African example of an organisation which approaches this issue in a more holistic way is Streetscapes, under the umbrella organisation of Khulisa Social Solutions. Streetscapes focuses on individuals who have previously been involved in crime and/or have suffered from chronic substance addiction. (Streetscapes, 2018). Through obtaining the criminal records of the beneficiaries of this project, it may be able to ascertain the cost of each beneficiary's involvement in crime versus the cost of the programme to assess the cost differential between these two programmes.

International Examples

Two international examples of this type of programme in countries which suffer from high levels of homelessness are the Republic of Ireland and the State of Victoria in Australia Strategies to address homelessness in Victoria aim to both provide the transitional accommodation, as well as the development of skills such as self-reliance and independence so that the eventual result can be permanent housing for the homeless (Hayes et al., 2003). Ireland was similar in their approaches. However, Hayes et al. (2003) find that in both Ireland and Victoria, what was lacking from their systems was sufficient government contribution. Arguably, this is a similar case to the South African context. Although there may be the presence of holistic programmes, there is an overburdening reliance on third party organisations (such as non-governmental organisations) to alleviate the plight of street-people through these means. Hayes et al. (2003) suggest that any solution should incorporate both government and third-party organisations for more long-term solutions to be created.

A further study conducted in Seattle, Washington confirmed the theory that holistic solutions could be effective in addressing homelessness. The study assessed 95 beneficiaries of a supportive housing programme known as a Housing First (HF) programme, against a control group of 39 individuals on a wait-list for housing (Collins et al., 2012). The participants of the programme all suffered from alcohol addiction. While most comparable programmes provide conditional help that is based on the participant's abstinence, what made this programme controversial was that participants were not disallowed from consuming alcohol. This study compared the "public use and costs" (mainly made up of hospital admission costs, as well as the cost of housing) of programme-participants against the wait-listed control group (Collins et al., 2012). Alcohol consumption levels were also monitored. It was ultimately that in six months, the savings from individuals participating in the programme sat at a monthly average of $2449 per person (Collins et al., 2012). This was largely due to reduced alcohol consumption. The benefits from this programme, increased with the time that participants were enrolled in the programme. At 12 months of enrolment, the average cost-saving per person increased to $42 964 per year (Collins et al., 2012). The results from this study should be read critically as the American and South African contexts are different. However, while the magnitudes of these effects may be different, it is likely that the direction of these effects may be similar in South Africa. For example, the Hopkins et al. (2020) study validated the hypothesis that

the longer one is homeless for, the more costly it is. Furthermore, it could be advisable for a similar study to be conducted in South Africa for these effects to be analysed.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, it has been reiterated that data issues regarding the homeless pose a great challenge to defeating the increasing trend of homelessness. Without accurate data on the number of homeless individuals, it is difficult to estimate the extent of intervention necessary or the success of interventions in reducing the number of those who live on the streets. The complexity of different causes which may drive an individual's state of homelessness also mean that a single solution may not necessarily be blanketly applied to end one's homelessness in every individual's circumstances. For this reason, research like the recent study estimating the cost of in Cape Town inspires confidence for future solutions, as the first step towards solution-building is understanding the extent and nature of the issue. It is recommendable that more research is conducted into ascertaining the extent of homelessness in South Africa.

What is evident from the available literature, is that there are different schools of thought when it comes to the correct approach for solving homelessness. One argument for the traditional mechanisms for solving homelessness, such as legislation and shelters is that, although they are harsh, they encourage street people to find jobs and get off the streets out of necessity (Killander, 2019). Another argument for legislation is that it is necessary to have it in place for the safety and security of communities and overall public interest (Johnsen et al., 2018). Seemingly, the stance of these types of arguments is to end homelessness through the adjustment of street people's behaviour and the provision of more homes (Johnsen et al., 2018). On the other hand, arguments for more holistic solutions to homelessness contend that these solutions are not effective in the long-term (Naidoo, 2010). By this logic, there are more viable and sustainable solutions, including holistic solutions that reintegrate the homeless back into society through programmes which give them responsibility and self-empowerment skills. The strength of these solutions lies in the fact that they also address the psychological element which shelters might miss out on: through the generation of self-empowerment and a greater sense of belonging, individuals may not be as likely to reject the help they receive, and this additionally deals with the antisocial concerns that were highlighted.

As an increasing volume of research is conducted in this field, particularly through interviews, it is becoming increasingly easier to understand the avenues for solution to homelessness. The solution is evidently not as simple as providing houses for those who do not have, but rather analysing the accessibility and placement of these houses as well as addressing the employment, social and poverty issues which drive homelessness. For this reason, it is suggested that more than formal legislation which criminalises acts of homelessness, or the provision of housing or transitional shelters, a solution which provides individuals a place in which they have some sense of belonging, responsibility and autonomy holds the greatest potential.

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